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Environment and sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report provides updated information on the implementation of the programme for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in pursuance of the recommendations of General Assembly resolution 56/195. The report also contains a section illustrating the work of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, which illustrates the degree of coordination of the system in this field.

The conclusions highlight the fact that the programme is progressing satisfactorily. The emphasis placed by the international community on the need to develop a long-term vision with regard to natural and related disasters galvanized the partnership spirit of the framework for the Strategy. Current efforts to build regional strategies are fostering the involvement of national constituencies in the implementation of the Strategy. Inter-agency coordination with regard to disaster reduction is improving. In addition, risk and vulnerability reduction concerns are being mainstreamed into other relevant programme areas. The programme for the Strategy should also look at the interdependence between natural and related technological and environmental hazards.

With regard to constraints, the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction, which relies solely on voluntary contributions, has not received sufficient resources to allow the secretariat for the Strategy to cover its core requirements or to carry out all of the initiatives included in its work plan. The lack of established posts for the secretariat staff is also a constraint.

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Recommendations are made in the report to optimize the programme for the Strategy and to help facilitate the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and the inter-agency secretariat. Among other things, it is recommended that countries increase their contributions to the Trust Fund, that the secretariat for the Strategy be able to count on established posts for its staff, and that the political profile and visibility of the Inter-Agency Task Force be increased substantially.

I. Introduction[1]

1. The years 2001 and 2002 witnessed an increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters and their economic consequences. According to figures released by the Munich Reinsurance Company (Munich Re), 25,000 people died in the 700 disasters recorded in 2001 alone. Economic losses associated with these disasters amounted to US$ 36 billion, marking yet another increase from the previous year (US$ 30 billion). At present trends, by 2050, 100,000 lives may be lost each year, and the average annual cost of disasters could top US$ 300 billion unless aggressive disaster reduction measures are put in place. The indirect effects of disasters on economic activities and other long-term consequences on the environment remain difficult to assess.

2. Against this backdrop, the General Assembly, by resolution 56/195 of 21 December 2001, confirmed the mandates of the inter-agency secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction as the institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy. This decision underlined the intention of providing the United Nations system with an enhanced capacity for the promotion and coordination of disaster reduction strategies, programmes and initiatives. This constituted a logical evolution of the political process, stemming from the conclusion of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in 1999 and leading to the launching and consolidation of the programme for the Strategy. Yet, the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction, which relies solely on voluntary contributions, has not received sufficient resources to allow the inter-agency secretariat for the Strategy to cover its core requirements or to carry out all the initiatives included in its work plan. The lack of established posts for the secretariat staff was also a constraint. At a particularly difficult juncture, the secretariat received timely support from the Governments of Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition, the Trust Fund received contributions from the Governments of Austria, Germany, Iceland, Japan, the Philippines and Sweden.

3. The present report provides updated information on the implementation of the programme for the Strategy, as well as information on the action taken to implement recommendations made by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. As recommended in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Strategy (A/56/68-E/2001/63 and Corr.1, para. 75), the present report focuses on the activities of the United Nations system. Information concerning activities carried out throughout the world in furtherance of the goals of the Strategy are to be found in the publication entitled *Living With Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives*, which will be issued in August 2002. Reports published by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the United Nations Development Programme in 2002 provide complementary information on risk reduction measures.

II. Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

A. Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction

4. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction has held five meetings in the period since its inception in 2000 and April 2002. The topics on which it has focused over the past year ranged from drought to disaster reduction in the context of sustainable development. Its four working groups have benefited from the new backstopping procedures implemented by the secretariat for the Strategy, which were conducive to increased results and better coordination. A particular area of focus in 2002 has been developing ways of cross-collaboration among its working groups so as to avoid duplication and ensure that their work is in consonance with the mandate of the Task Force.

5. Since it provides a forum to discuss the large variety of aspects relating to disaster reduction, the Inter-Agency Task Force has a role to play in facilitating coordination and the exchange of information among agencies and other relevant entities. Based on the experience gathered over the first two years of its existence, however, the profile of the Task Force and its visibility could be improved to enable it to become an appropriate mechanism for devising disaster reduction policies and strategies.

6. The membership of the Task Force consists of 14 United Nations agencies and organizations, 8 regional

entities, and 8 representatives of civil society and relevant professional sectors. Members in the latter category are rotated every two years. In 2002, the Task Force completed the initial phase of its first rotation.[2] With reference to the request of the General Assembly to be informed of criteria for the selection of non-permanent members of the Task Force, it should be noted that the following criteria have been formulated by the Task Force:

(a) Members designated are entities or organizations, not individuals;

(b) Candidate entities and organizations should be well positioned to represent the interests of relevant public or private professional sectors involved in disaster reduction or that of critical elements of civil society having a stake in disaster reduction;

(c) Member entities must have an actual involvement in disaster reduction as part of their mandate and possess an adequate capacity to implement such mandate, which should be consistent with the aims and goals of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; in addition, member entities should have the capacity of developing partnerships and working relations with governmental and international organizations in the area of disaster reduction;

(d) Geographical balance shall be taken into account in the designation of candidates, as shall facilitating representation from those developing countries most vulnerable to disasters;

(e) An effective balance among various types of expertise (earthquakes, volcanoes, droughts, cyclones, geological hazards, hydrometeorological hazards) should be taken into account in the selection of candidates.

B. Inter-agency secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

7. Under a renewed leadership, the inter-agency secretariat for the Strategy has been consolidating its functions and operating modalities. In particular, the secretariat is focusing on the provision of an enabling environment for better inter-agency cooperation with regard to disaster reduction, and channelling advice to organizations concerned with the design and implementation of risk reduction measures. In addition, the secretariat has initiated a process aimed at synchronizing the priorities of the programme for the Strategy with the goals of the Millennium Declaration.[3] As a first step, the secretariat has elaborated its work plan based on the renewed mandate stemming from General Assembly resolutions. For the period 2002-2003, the main goals are:

(a) To consolidate the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as the global framework for coordinated action by international organizations, professional institutions and Governments in order to ensure that disaster reduction becomes part of mainstream sustainable development strategies and programmes and is reflected in relevant international agendas and sectoral plans;[4]

(b) To ensure that concepts and methodologies relating to disaster reduction are understood and effectively applied by a growing number of disaster-prone communities around the world.

8. In keeping with the inter-agency nature of the secretariat, several programmatic meetings have been held with a number of United Nations agencies in order to share objectives and discuss joint activities. In this context, close working relations have been established with the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. Periodic tripartite meetings are being held to develop a platform for collaboration and coordination in areas pertaining to disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness, in which the three partner organizations have distinct yet complementary mandates. The three offices have also been participating in the discussion on the role of the United Nations in natural disasters. The secretariat for the Strategy and the UNDP Bureau have elaborated a joint framework for collaboration that is designed to increase synergy and coordination between the two offices.

9. Additional consultations leading to closer collaborative links were held with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) — which included consultations on the establishment of an international centre for the study of the El Niño phenomenon (see A/57/189) — the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the

World Health Organization (WHO), and the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

10. The secretariat is also following policy formulation processes that are taking place in other areas in which disaster reduction is relevant, such as sustainable development, environment, climate change, desertification and freshwater. In particular, the preparatory process leading to the World Summit on Sustainable Development has been high on the agenda of the secretariat throughout 2001 and 2002. The secretariat has engaged in extensive consultations with a variety of United Nations and civil society partners, including the Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future. These consultations were conducive to the inclusion of disaster reduction in the agenda of the Summit.

11. The secretariat has started planning for the 10-year review of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action,[5] adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held at Yokohama, Japan, in 1994. The review is expected to provide an opportunity to assess the state of disaster reduction throughout the world and to identify gaps, future priorities and programmes of action.

12. As anticipated in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the Strategy (A/56/68 and Corr. 1), the secretariat has embarked on a periodic review of disaster reduction initiatives undertaken throughout the world. The global review for 2002 conveys areas of current interest and presents indications of global trends in disaster reduction practices. This record will initiate a structured process to maintain and disseminate information on disaster reduction on a periodic basis. The review also attempts to stimulate a process of developing and applying agreed professional criteria that reflect the global progress made in risk reduction. An inter-institutional initiative is ongoing so as to maximize coordination and synergy among future issues of the global review and other reports published by IFRC and UNDP.

13. In responding to the general requirement for increased interaction between governmental representatives and the secretariat for the Strategy, the latter has facilitated an open-ended contact group of permanent missions at Geneva. The group met twice in 2002 to discuss policy orientation of the programme for the Strategy. The contact group will also look into the funding of initiatives and core requirements. In this vein, the Government of Switzerland took the lead in convening a group of supporters of the Strategy, which includes a core group of Governments which are interested in providing advice and supporting the financial requirements of the inter-agency secretariat.

14. Pursuant to the call by the General Assembly for the strengthening of the regional outreach of the inter-agency secretariat and the provision of support for national platforms (resolution 56/195, para. 10), the secretariat has increased its efforts to disseminate disaster reduction information, documentation and policy guidelines at the regional level, while designing proposals for additional regional activities, including the hosting of regional outposts by partner organizations.

15. In Africa, the secretariat has continued its efforts to consolidate partnerships with a view to launching a regional programme for Africa in 2002, which will include the establishment of an outpost at Nairobi. This initiative includes subregional articulations, such as the process currently under way in the subregion of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) which is aimed at strengthening disaster management and reduction mechanisms in the Horn of Africa. Similar activities are being undertaken in other African subregions, building on processes that are ongoing or planned by relevant regional organizations.

16. In Asia, the collaboration of the secretariat with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre has become the platform for various joint initiatives, meetings and a continuing exchange of information. Discussion with other partners, including the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP are taking place in order to develop a coordinated outreach programme in 2003.

17. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the secretariat outpost in Costa Rica organized, in collaboration with several partners, a variety of workshops and other meetings, including the Hemispheric Conference on Risk Reduction, which was convened in December 2001 in cooperation with the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance of the United States Agency for International

Development (USAID), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and several regional organizations in order to follow up recommendations of the third Summit of the Americas, held in April 2001. A radio soap opera was produced and an educational manual for children was developed jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The secretariat web site for the region was enhanced and a publication on lessons learned from the El Salvador earthquake of January 2001 was released.[6] The magazine *ISDR Informs* continues to be published twice a year, and several other activities have been carried out or planned in collaboration with PAHO, a major partner in the region.

18. The secretariat is also gradually expanding its capacity to support countries that are willing to establish or strengthen national multisectoral mechanisms to promote and support disaster reduction initiatives. Dedicated national platforms benefit from the exchange of information with counterparts in other countries and international partners, and from facilitated access to ongoing international debates. The secretariat is seeking the cooperation of UNDP and other relevant agencies in supporting this process, which is considered essential for the success of the Strategy.

C. Activities undertaken by partner agencies and organizations in support of the Strategy[7]

19. A large number of activities have been carried out by numerous agencies and organizations in support of the goals and principles of the Strategy, especially in the areas highlighted in the framework document for its implementation. There has been a distinct increase in inter-agency partnerships and initiatives within that framework, confirming the general tendency to recognize disaster reduction as an imperative for development.

20. In 2001, UNDP, through its country offices, regional bureaux and specialized programmes, and with technical support provided by its Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, strengthened disaster reduction capacities in over 60 countries. These programmes included building local capacities for disaster reduction in Central America and Jamaica; developing a new national risk and disaster management system in Haiti; strengthening national disaster offices in the English-speaking Caribbean countries; developing regional strategies for disaster management in countries members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe; addressing flood risk reduction in the Tisza river basin (Hungary, Romania and Ukraine); and addressing drought risks in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As part of their country frameworks, a number of UNDP country offices are designing major multi-year programmes which include disaster reduction. UNDP also provided support for several capacity-building programmes, including those in Albania, East Timor, Madagascar, Malawi and Romania. Additional programmes are being designed for Afghanistan, Nepal and the Sudan. UNDP has also contributed to the enhancement of international policies in disaster reduction, including a disaster profile of the least developed countries.

21. Following the major earthquakes in El Salvador, Gujarat (India) and Peru, the flash floods in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hurricane Michelle in Cuba, the volcanic eruption at Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo), floods in Senegal, the hailstorms and flash floods in Bolivia, and the earthquakes in Afghanistan and Georgia, UNDP developed post-disaster recovery strategies which used recovery as an opportunity to address disaster reduction objectives.

22. Recognizing the importance of documenting, sharing and learning from best practice at the regional and subregional levels, UNDP has developed disaster reduction knowledge networking in Central and South-West Asia, and in Central America and the Caribbean in partnership with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. UNDP is also preparing a world vulnerability report which in 2002 will focus on disasters and development. The report will contain case studies of best practice and a global index of disaster, risk and vulnerability, prepared in collaboration with the UNEP Global Resource Information Database and the International Research Institute for Climate Prediction of Columbia University (United States of America).

23. In support of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, UNDP chairs the working group on risk, vulnerability and impact assessment, which has facilitated international collaboration in the development of a risk and vulnerability index and

improvement in the consistency, accuracy and coverage of disaster impact data. The working group collaborates with the working group on climate and disasters in order to improve climate-related risk information by correlating climate and disaster databases.

24. UNDP efforts to advocate for and promote disaster reduction included the convening of a regional seminar in cooperation with the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America and the Spanish Agency for Iberoamerican Cooperation, as well as two regional seminars in the Caribbean. In addition, a regional seminar on drought risk management was held at Tehran. UNDP has also been working closely with the secretariat for the Strategy on the preparatory work for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

25. In 2001, the Executive Board of UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund recognized disaster reduction and recovery as a core business area of UNDP, reflected in transformation of the former Emergency Response Division into the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. Disaster reduction concerns are also increasingly mainstreamed into UNDP country programme frameworks. In this connection, UNDP is outposting five regional disaster reduction advisers to Africa, Asia, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America and the Caribbean. In the context of the United Nations system, UNDP is strengthening and further defining its areas of collaboration with both the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the secretariat for the Strategy.

26. The United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme, managed by UNDP, has continued to provide its services in risk reduction education to both the United Nations system and Member States, especially disaster-prone developing countries. Following the convening of inter-agency assessments and dedicated workshops, a comprehensive plan for Central America for the period 2002-2004 was elaborated, and preparations were begun for the convening of country workshops in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The Training Programme, in cooperation with SADC, designed a plan for Southern Africa for the period 2002-2005, which is being completed with inter-agency support. National workshops were held in Georgia and Nepal, while inter-agency programming for future initiatives was begun in Albania, Armenia, the Balkans (together with Bulgaria and Romania), East Timor, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The Training Programme also launched a database of the disaster risk reduction training programmes and resources available throughout the world. Finally, an inter-agency distance learning programme has been designed.

27. In the Strategic Framework for 2000-2015 of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), disaster reduction is identified as one of the important strategies to address the needs of member States, with specific reference to the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty. In this respect, FAO has continued to assist in the development and implementation of disaster-prevention programmes and preparedness plans in order to protect agricultural production systems. FAO also provides technical assistance to strengthen capacities to prevent or mitigate the impact of natural hazards.

28. The recently transformed Emergency Operation and Rehabilitation Division of FAO has overall responsibility for the emergency field programme and linkages between emergency and rehabilitative activities and the FAO humanitarian policy. Through the World Agricultural Information Centre of FAO, a web site is being created to provide an overview as well as in-depth access to disaster reduction information.[8] FAO also continues, through the Global Information and Early Warning System, to provide information on agricultural disasters, food shortages and insecurity, and to mobilize international support for agricultural disaster reduction and relief activities.

29. In 2001, FAO published an analysis of the medium-term effects of Hurricane Mitch on food security in Central America. It also organized an international expert meeting on forest fire management, in cooperation with the International Tropical Timber Organization, and the Asia-Pacific conference on early warning, preparedness, prevention and management of disasters in food and agriculture in Thailand. FAO has also upgraded its capacity to provide operational services on environmental information by means of an advanced real-time environmental information monitoring system, using satellite data.

30. In addition to its participation in the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force, in which it chairs the

working group on early warning, UNEP has carried out a number of activities aimed at reducing the impact of natural and related environmental and technological disasters. UNEP is implementing a strategic framework on emergency prevention, preparedness, assessment, mitigation and response. In the area of lessons learned, a project is under way on the analysis of causes and long-term environmental impact of emergencies and the possible implications for Governments and the international community.

31. In the area of capacity-building and institutional strengthening, UNEP undertook a joint mission with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to Nigeria to assess disaster management mechanisms and formulate an integrated strategy and support programme. UNEP and UN-Habitat have also continued their joint project on mitigation management and control of floods in South Asia. UNEP has also assisted the Government of Venezuela in rationalizing landslide vulnerability and risk maps at the national and local levels. A number of projects have also been prepared, ranging from flood management to information exchange networks in Africa, Latin America and the South Pacific.

32. The UNEP Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) programme is a tool for raising awareness and improving the preparedness of communities exposed to environmental emergencies. The programme addresses all environmental emergencies related to the industrial activities that can result from human activity or as a consequence of natural disasters. By providing information to the community and putting together an overall, coordinated response plan, APELL aims to protect people, property and the environment. APELL has been introduced in more than 30 countries and its implementation through country seminars and workshops and national APELL centres has improved the level of preparedness of local emergency services, and the understanding of local communities of how to react to emergencies.

33. With regard to early warning for disaster reduction, UNEP and its partners have identified a number of glacial lakes in the Himalayan mountain region as presenting a high risk of glacial lake outburst floods. In this connection, UNEP is assisting the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal in developing early warning systems that will warn communities of an impending flood and in carrying out engineering works to reduce the risks. In another area, UNEP has produced a scientific study that addresses the drying out of the Mesopotamian marshlands. Based on the study, Governments in the region are taking action to implement appropriate measures. Finally, through the joint environment unit of UNEP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP provided environmental expertise to allow the United Nations system to deal with three disasters that had a significant environmental impact.[9]

34. WMO runs several programmes related to the mitigation of natural disasters and participates actively in the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, both directly and through national meteorological and hydrological services and several regional specialized metecrological centres. The assessment and reporting process of the WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has contributed to the identification of the potential impact of climate extremes. WMO has lead responsibility for the working group of the Inter-Agency Task Force on climate and disasters and participates in those on early warning and on risk vulnerability and assessment. WMO has continued to provide support to the secretariat for the Strategy, including by seconding a senior staff member.

35. Capacity-building activities within the World Weather Watch programme have progressed significantly. In addition, the African Centre for Meteorological Applications to Development at Niamey, the Specialized Meteorological Centre of the Association of South-East Asian Nations in Singapore, the National Space Research Institute in Brazil, and the drought monitoring centres at Nairobi and Harare generate regionally focused output. The WMO Tropical Cyclone Programme provides support for capacity-building and promotes the development of tropical cyclone regional specialized meteorological centres in the tropical cyclone basins. This project is being implemented with a view to expanding it to other regions. WMO has also designated eight regional specialized monitoring centres to provide atmospheric transport model products for an environmental emergency response that covers the globe.

36. The World Climate Programme provides an authoritative scientific voice on climate, climate variations and climate change. The Programme assists countries in the application of climate information and knowledge to national sustainable development. The

Climate Information and Prediction Services project of the Programme has been designed to assist countries in using climate data for disaster preparedness, water resources management and the protection of human health.

37. WMO contributes significantly to the review of sectoral systems, both within and outside the United Nations system, for the monitoring of climate-related emergencies. WMO is well placed to coordinate hazard assessment studies by United Nations agencies during the current El Niño event. Special efforts are being made to elaborate the seasonal to inter-annual climate forecasts available from national meteorological services. In particular, WMO and the secretariat for the Strategy have been collaborating with the Government of Ecuador on the establishment of an international centre for the study of the El Niño phenomenon.

38. WHO looks at disasters as major public health issues and views disaster reduction as a core function of the health sector and, as such, applies the public health model to disaster reduction. In particular, WHO contributes to the implementation of the Strategy by: producing policies and advocacy that highlight disasters as public health issues and health as the objective and the yardstick of disaster reduction; producing health intelligence, as a key contribution to intersectoral and inter-agency coordination; and supporting institutional focal points and structures in member States and partner agencies. The work of WHO on preparedness, started in the Americas in the 1970s, is being extended to other regions: success stories include Nepal, Bangladesh, the countries of the Mekong basin, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and the border areas of the Horn of Africa. Disseminating best public health practices for disaster reduction is part of the normative responsibility of WHO as a specialized agency. WHO produced, together with the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the Red Cross Movement and the Sphere project, a CD-ROM, Health Library for Disasters, which carries 250 documents, and the WHO Emergency Health Library Kit, which contains hard copies of 130 essential guidelines. Mobilizing partnerships is another method for WHO to maximize the contribution of the health sector to disaster reduction. Besides the institutional partnership with ministers of health and other partners at national level, such as the Red Cross Movement and UNICEF, WHO is intensifying its participation in United Nations work on assessment and resource mobilization for national and regional disaster reduction initiatives.

39. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has promoted activities aimed at developing a better scientific understanding of the occurrence and distribution of disasters in time and space. Other sectors in which UNESCO has been active include the development of educational material, the provision of technical advice on hazard-resistant construction of schools and the protection of cultural heritage. In addition, a specific interdisciplinary programme related to natural disaster reduction was launched in 2002. The scientific and technical contribution of UNESCO to disaster reduction is carried out under the organization's natural hazards programmes in the earth sciences and builds on its five intergovernmental and international scientific programmes: the International Geological Correlation Programme, the International Hydrological Programme, the Man and Biosphere programme, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the Management of Social Transformations programme. Other ongoing efforts encompass an international programme on landslide risk mitigation, a regional programme on earthquake risk reduction in the Mediterranean region and a project on capacity-building for natural disaster reduction in Central America.

40. UN-Habitat promotes socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development, good urban governance and the achievement of adequate shelter for all. UN-Habitat has established the Risk and Disaster Management Programme under the Disaster, Post-Conflict and Safety Section in response to an increasing demand from member countries for technical support, normative and policy tools, and operational capacity in the field concerning disaster prevention, mitigation and post-disaster rehabilitation in human settlements. Disaster-related activities focus in particular on the physical and management components of shelter, infrastructure and services, with priority given to activities at the local level, and on training and technical support to increase the capacity of local authorities and communities for disaster and human settlements management in the context of good local governance. UN-Habitat is an active partner in the implementation of the Strategy, especially in the areas

of land and urban management, impact assessment and capacity-building. Processes such as the campaigns for good urban governance and secure tenure provide important opportunities to promote disaster reduction in urban areas, in support of local authorities. The Programme also supports the establishment of cooperative networks in South-East Asia and Central America and the Caribbean for local vulnerability reduction, as well as training and capacity-building programmes in Southern Africa.

41. The World Bank recognizes disasters as a major threat for the poor, and continues its efforts to reduce the impact of disaster in the fight against poverty in developing countries. The Bank's Disaster Management Facility has been working actively since 1998 to integrate disaster risk management into the Bank's development efforts. The Facility serves as a central resource for disaster-related issues, providing technical support to the Bank's operations, policy guidance, and research and learning activities that promote effective disaster risk management. The number of operations focused on disaster prevention and mitigation has increased over recent years; examples include projects in Honduras, India, Nicaragua, the countries members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, Mexico and Turkey. The Bank is also working closely with its partners through the ProVention Consortium, which serves as a network to leverage resources to advance the agenda of disaster risk reduction in consonance with the goals of the Strategy. Examples of the activities of the ProVention Consortium include research to document the economic and financial impact of disasters on longer-term development; the promotion of standards for assessing damage and recovery needs; identification of disaster risk hot spots to inform priority investments in disaster mitigation; and the exploration of better ways to manage the financial impact of disasters and promote investment for disaster prevention.

42. The Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat has continued to carry out its activities in the field of space applications for disaster reduction, also in keeping with the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space will review in 2003 possible global operational structures for disaster management. Furthermore, the Committee established in 2001 an action team on disaster management, led by China, Canada and France, to respond to the recommendations of the Third Conference. Currently, 39 States and 11 international organizations and entities, including the secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, participate in the action team.

43. The Office for Outer Space Affairs also cooperates with the secretariat for the Strategy and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites and other organizations in promoting the use of space tools for disaster management. This includes the provision of technical advisory services, in particular to developing countries, and the organization of workshops with the following objectives: to inform managers and decision makers involved in disaster management of the benefits and the cost-effectiveness of using space technologies; to identify user requirements for managing specific disasters and determine the extent to which these could be met by space technologies; and to develop a blueprint for action that could lead to pilot projects that incorporate space tools for disaster management. Following on from the first regional workshop for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in November 2000, the Office has planned two regional workshops in 2002, one in Africa and the other in Asia and the Pacific. Both have enjoyed the substantive support of the secretariat for the Strategy.

44. The United Nations University (UNU) continues to undertake project activities in support of the achievement of the goals of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The initiative on the social aspects of urban vulnerability is designed to highlight, produce and disseminate methodologies for the analysis of urban social vulnerability. Activities on disaster information and technologies continue to be undertaken, in partnership with the International Centre for Disaster Mitigation Engineering of the University of Tokyo. To enhance preparedness for the next El Niño occurrence and other climate-related disasters, a research project was undertaken in cooperation with UNEP, the United States National Center for Atmospheric Research, WMO and the secretariat for the Strategy. As a follow-up to this initiative, UNU has developed a multidisciplinary climate affairs capacity-building programme. UNU also cooperates with the University of Geneva and the Swiss Federal School of Lausanne in the international course on analysis and management of geological risk.

45. Following Hurricane Mitch in Central America, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) helped to design and implement a decentralized cooperation initiative known as Towns helping Towns, in collaboration with UNDP, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The initiative aims at establishing an international platform to channel technical and financial assistance from local authorities to Central American counterparts most affected by the disaster. The initiative benefits from the partnership between UNOPS and the United Towns Organization. A concrete example of a successful development within the framework of Towns helping Towns is the support provided by UNOPS in the cooperation between the Canton of Geneva and the municipalities of Matagalpa and Rio Grande river basin, Nicaragua.

46. In Africa, UNOPS has been providing support to IGAD since September 2001 for the implementation of the IGAD disaster preparedness strategy. This comprehensive, medium-term programme, which receives support from the secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and other partners, is expected to benefit from the cooperation of UNDP, UNEP, UN-Habitat, FAO and ILO. At the request of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP, UNOPS is also providing services in the implementation of some disaster management programmes, including those in Djibouti and the Sudan, some of which stem from activities undertaken by the Disaster Management Training Programme. Since October 2001, UNOPS has been implementing a project, at the request of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, known as UNOSAT, which provides satellite imagery, image-processing services, maps and other geographical information to United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations by means of the Internet.

47. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has continued to assist developing countries in the region in building capacities for disaster reduction, especially with relation to sustainable development, and to promote stronger regional cooperation to counter water-related disasters. Activities carried out by ESCAP include the implementation in 2001 of a regional project aimed at strengthening the capacity in participatory planning and management for flood mitigation and preparedness in large river basins in Asia and the Pacific. Under the project, four case studies were carried out in China, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam. Among the activities undertaken in each of these countries was the convening in 2001 of national seminars on public awareness and participation in Nanjing, Calcutta, Jakarta and Hanoi.

48. At the regional level, a workshop on participatory planning and management for flood mitigation and preparedness in large river basins in Asia and the Pacific was held at Bangkok in 2001. In addition, in cooperation with WMO and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan, ESCAP assisted the Typhoon Committee in carrying out a review aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in flood forecasting and disaster prevention and preparedness. As a follow up to this review, ESCAP, in cooperation with the Typhoon Committee secretariat, WMO and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, assisted in the implementation of several activities, including the elaboration of an implementation programme; the organization of a regional workshop on integration of risk analysis and management of water-related disasters into the development process in the Typhoon Committee area, to be held at Manila in July 2002; and the mobilization of Typhoon Committee members for the implementation of priority activities, in particular for hazard risk mapping and forecasting of flash floods and other disasters.

49. The United Nations Centre for Regional Development carries out initiatives and studies on disaster reduction. In 2001, the Centre focused on community-level vulnerability in developing countries, with particular reference to earthquakes with the intention of providing affordable means of reducing risk. Special emphasis was placed on translating technology into practice with a participatory approach. In addition, the Centre has promoted the School Earthquake Safety Initiative (SESI). Training programmes were also conducted in 21 urban communities in developing countries and in several rural communities in earthquake-affected areas of Gujarat, India. In order to disseminate best practice, five international workshops were organized (at Kobe, Japan, in January 2001, at Quito in March 2001, at Ahmedabad, India, in January 2002, and again at Kobe in January and in February 2002). Each was attended by more than 100 participants from both the public and

private sectors. In the area of advisory services and networking for communities, support has been provided to various communities through SESI and other projects for the education, awareness-raising and capacity-building of vulnerable groups, while emphasizing self-help and cooperation. Several active networks among various sectors of the communities have been established by means of these activities.

50. States parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa have recognized the importance of building on existing early warning systems within the framework of national action programmes in order to mitigate the effects of drought and promote sustainable development. This would assist them in mitigating the effects of drought that are likely to worsen as a consequence of climate change. To this end, the Convention secretariat has encouraged parties to the Convention to enhance national capabilities and develop drought contingency plans at the local, national, subregional and regional levels. To date, approximately 50 national action programmes have been finalized. The Committee on Science and Technology established two ad hoc panels of experts to examine the issue of early warning in the light of the approach adopted in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, while parties to the Convention have been encouraged to carry out pilot studies on early warning, based on the recommendations of the panels.

51. The work of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) has continued to evolve towards integrating disaster prevention considerations into disaster management and civil protection issues, which are at the core of the organization's mandate. The main asset of ICDO is the network of national civil defence entities with which it has direct communication channels. Based on this, ICDO has carried out a series of initiatives ranging from training, with more than 1,400 days of training provided in more than 22 countries, to specialized publications, such as directories, disaster management manuals and multilingual glossaries. In addition, ICDO maintains a web site as a tool for enhanced interaction with its member States and the general public.[10] The twelfth world conference on civil defence, held at Geneva in June 2001, produced a substantive report on civil defence as a tool for international solidarity in the face of disasters, which was published in March 2002.

III. Conclusions

52. **In general, the implementation of the programme for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is progressing satisfactorily. First, the emphasis placed by the international community on the need to develop a long-term vision with regard to natural and related disasters has galvanized the spirit of partnership within the framework for the Strategy. Second, current efforts to build regional strategies and programmes are fostering the involvement of national constituencies in the programme for the Strategy and deepening their awareness of disaster reduction. Third, inter-agency coordination within the United Nations system with regard to disaster reduction has improved tangibly, to the benefit of all agencies and organizations concerned. The role of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction deserves mention in this regard. Finally, risk and vulnerability reduction concerns are being mainstreamed into such programme areas as sustainable development, desertification, health, education, climate change and environment. Conversely, the programme for the Strategy will need to embrace natural and related technological and environmental hazards in a more holistic manner, ensuring that their interdependence is not overlooked.**

53. **Some positive results have also been achieved with respect to synergy among the disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system and those in the socio-economic and humanitarian fields. On the one hand, the programme for the Strategy constitutes an optimal complement to the programmes implemented by UNDP in developing countries. On the other hand, with respect to emergency relief, there is an obvious link between the various phases of disaster management and vulnerability reduction requirements which relate to longer-term development policies. Work in this area is undertaken in particular in the framework of the meetings convened jointly by UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the secretariat for the Strategy.**

54. The partnership-based policy of the secretariat in addressing inter-agency cooperation is aimed at enabling the United Nations system to bring about its full potential in the area of disaster reduction. United Nations agencies and organizations active in the development, socio-economic and humanitarian areas are benefiting from the secretariat's function as the focal point within the United Nations system for disaster reduction. Despite this, and the inclusion of disaster reduction among the goals of the Millennium Declaration, the visibility of disaster reduction within the United Nations system needs to be further improved.

55. Lack of response by the donor community to the financial requirements of the secretariat for the Strategy remains a serious concern, especially when compared with the functions mandated to the secretariat and the ever-increasing expectations of the international community with regard to disaster reduction. This situation is contradictory and potentially undermines the implementation of the Strategy, in particular in relation to realizing its goals and objectives in developing countries.

56. In the immediate future, two main areas of concern will be the work related to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which should allow for creating linkages between disaster reduction and policies and practices aimed at achieving sustainable development and the 2003-2004 process for the 10-year review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action.

IV. Recommendations

57. Member States should continue to support and utilize the programme for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as a common multidisciplinary platform for the development of policies and measures to reduce the impact of natural and other related hazards on vulnerable societies and to integrate disaster reduction into their long-term planning.

58. All countries should make additional efforts to support the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction and the requirements of the secretariat to administer it, with a view to enabling the Trust Fund to sustain the work undertaken within the framework of the Strategy and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships for disaster reduction, especially in developing countries.

59. Agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and entities should avail themselves of the programme for the Strategy as an enabling environment for enhanced coordination, synergy and collaboration, and should benefit from the role of the secretariat for the Strategy in the development of joint initiatives, studies and programmes for disaster and risk reduction.

60. In consideration of the importance assigned to disaster reduction in the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, it is recommended that the secretariat for the Strategy follow up closely on the recommendations arising from the World Summit and play a role in the implementation of the commitments emerging from it, as appropriate.

61. The secretariat for the Strategy should begin, in collaboration with Governments, agencies and other entities concerned, a full review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action. This review process will help to identify gaps and means of implementation in a way that will chart the course of action for the forthcoming decade, while taking into account the outcome of the World Summit.

62. The programme for the Strategy should continue to develop its regional outreach, integrating in one vision regional strategies and the network of national platforms for disaster reduction by developing appropriate manuals and guidelines.

63. The secretariat for the Strategy should continue to issue periodic reviews of disaster reduction initiatives undertaken throughout the world as a means of documenting the evolution of disaster reduction and trends therein. These reviews should be done in progressive synergy with other reports, such as the world vulnerability report published by UNDP and the world disasters report issued by IFRC. These reviews should be regarded in the longer term as an important component of an international information clearing house on disaster reduction, to be developed by the secretariat for the Strategy and its partners.

64. The secretariat for the Strategy should continue to be strengthened, in keeping with General Assembly resolutions 54/219 of 22 December 1999 and 56/195, and measures should be explored to provide more stable and predictable financial resources. In keeping with the recommendations of the Assembly and those contained in the previous reports of the Secretary-General, the secretariat for the Strategy should be provided with adequate capacity to perform its mandated tasks, which would include the establishment of regular posts for its staff so as to match actual operating requirements.

65. The political profile and the visibility of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction should be enhanced by progressively raising the profile of its meetings, including the organization of high-level sessions in which member organizations and entities should be represented at the highest level. At the same time, the chair of the Task Force should ensure that its working groups constitute ad hoc arrangements with clearly defined objectives and schedules, and that their activities are in tune with the overall mandate and objectives of the Task Force.

66. The Task Force should avail itself of contributions stemming from associated forums, gathering expertise from various constituencies such as the contact group on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; civil society and non-governmental organizations; relevant professional, academic and scientific sectors; and national platforms for disaster reduction. The secretariat for the Strategy should facilitate the establishment of such associated forums and ensure that they relate to the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force.

67. The General Assembly should be informed of the progress made in the implementation of the programme for the Strategy at its fifty-eighth session in 2003, and in particular the activities of the Inter-Agency Task Force, as decided by the Assembly in paragraph 3 of its resolution 56/195.

Notes

[1] For more information and access to relevant documents and publications mentioned in the present report, see www.unisdr.org.

[2] As at June 2002, the following entities and organizations were members of the Task Force: United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Food Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization, International Telecommunication Union, World Meteorological Organization, World Bank, Council of Europe, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, African Union, Organization of American States, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, Interstate Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Iberoamerican Association of Civil Defence and Civil Protection entities, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Council for Science, Drought Monitoring Centre at Nairobi, Munich Reinsurance Company and Global Fire Monitoring Centre.

[3] Section IV of the Declaration, entitled "Protecting our common environment", sets forth a goal which relates specifically to disaster reduction and which is relevant to the programme for the Strategy, namely, "To intensify cooperation to reduce the number and effects of natural and man-made disasters".

[4] Sectoral plans cover such areas as environment, human settlements, agriculture, health and education.

[5] A/CONF.172/9, resolution 1, annex I.

[6] For more information, see www.eird.org.

[7] The section highlights some recent policy and programmatic initiatives undertaken by the agencies of the United Nations system which have forwarded information to the secretariat, therefore not all of the agencies and organizations active in disaster reduction are mentioned. The global review of disaster reduction initiatives contains data relating to a larger number of initiatives carried out by partners from within and outside the United Nations system.

[8] The web site focuses on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness, and post-emergency relief and rehabilitation, which have both been identified by FAO as priority areas for interdisciplinary action.

[9] The ammunition dump explosion in Nigeria, the floods in Bolivia and the chemical spill in Djibouti. UNEP also continues its work on post-conflict environmental assessment.

[10] www.icdo.org.